Dear Brothers and Sisters,

The Church’s service to the sick and those who care for them must continue with renewed vigour, in fidelity to the Lord's command (cf. Lk 9:2-6; Mt 10:1-8; Mk 6:7-13) and following the eloquent example of her Founder and Master.

The theme for this year’s Day of the Sick is provided by the words that Jesus spoke from the Cross to Mary, his Mother, and to John: “Woman, behold your son ... Behold your mother. And from that hour the disciple took her into his home” (Jn 19:26-27).

The Lord’s words brilliantly illuminate the mystery of the Cross, which does not represent a hopeless tragedy, but rather the place where Jesus manifests his glory and shows his love to the end. That love in turn was to become the basis and rule for the Christian community and the life of each disciple.

Before all else, Jesus’ words are the source of Mary’s maternal vocation for all humanity. Mary was to be, in particular, the Mother of her Son’s disciples, caring for them and their journey through life. As we know, a mother’s care for her son or daughter includes both the material and spiritual dimensions of their upbringing.

John, the beloved disciple, is a figure of the Church, the messianic people. He must acknowledge Mary as his Mother. In doing so, he is called to take her into his home, to see in her the model of all discipleship, and to contemplate the maternal vocation that Jesus entrusted to her, with all that it entails: a loving Mother who gives birth to children capable of loving as Jesus commands. That is why Mary’s maternal vocation to care for her children is entrusted to John and to the Church as a whole. The entire community of disciples is included in Mary’s maternal vocation.

John, as a disciple who shared everything with Jesus, knows that the Master wants to lead all people to an encounter with the Father. He can testify to the fact that Jesus met many people suffering from spiritual sickness due to pride (cf. Jn 8:31-39) and from physical ailments (cf. Jn 5:6). He bestowed mercy and forgiveness upon all, and healed the sick as a sign of the abundant life of the Kingdom, where every tear will be wiped away. Like Mary, the disciples are called to care for one another, but not only that. They know that Jesus’ heart is open to all and excludes no one. The Gospel of the Kingdom must be proclaimed to all, and the charity of Christians must be directed to all, simply because they are persons, children of God.

The memory of this long history of service to the sick is cause for rejoicing on the part of the Christian community, and especially those presently engaged in this ministry. Yet we must look to the past above all to let it enrich us. We should learn the lesson it teaches us about the self-sacrificing generosity of many founders of institutes in the service of the infirm, the creativity, prompted by charity, of many initiatives undertaken over the centuries, and the commitment to scientific research as a means of offering innovative and reliable treatments to the sick. This legacy of the past helps us to build a better future, for example, by shielding Catholic hospitals from the business mentality that is seeking worldwide to turn health care into a profit-making enterprise, which ends up discarding the poor. Wise organization and charity demand that the sick person be respected in his or her dignity, and constantly kept at the centre of the therapeutic process. This should likewise be the approach of Christians who work in public structures; through their service, they too are called to bear convincing witness to the Gospel.

To Mary, Mother of tender love, we wish to entrust all those who are ill in body and soul, that she may sustain them in hope. We ask her also to help us to be welcoming to our sick brothers and sisters. The Church knows that she requires a special grace to live up to her evangelical task of serving the sick. May our prayers to the Mother of God see us united in an incessant plea that every member of the Church may live with love the vocation to serve life and health. May the Virgin Mary intercede for this Twenty-sixth World Day of the Sick; may she help the sick to experience their suffering in communion with the Lord Jesus; and may she support all those who care for them. To all, the sick, to healthcare workers and to volunteers, I cordially impart my Apostolic Blessing.

From the Vatican, 26 November 2017
Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe

FRANCIS
Lenten/Easter Season

**Ash Wednesday**

February 14, 2018

Blessing & Distribution of Ashes
9:15 am – St. Boniface with the School
3:30 – Bluewater Resthome
7:00 pm – St. Peter’s

**Sung Evening Prayer**

Sunday, February 18 at 7 pm at St. Boniface
Sunday, February 25 at 7 pm at St. Peter’s
Sunday, March 4 at 7 pm at St. Boniface
Sunday, March 11 at 7 pm at St. Peter’s
Sunday, March 18 at 7 pm at St. Boniface
Sunday, March 25 at 7 pm at St. Boniface

**Stations of the Cross during Lent**

Tuesday mornings
at 11:30 am followed by Mass at St. Peter’s

**All Day Confessions**

Wednesday, March 21, 2018
at St. Boniface Church
Mass at 8:30 am followed by Adoration from 9:00 am – 9:00 pm
Confession Times:
9:00–11:00 am, 1:00–4:00 pm, 6:00 – 9:00 pm

**Holy Week**

**Palm Sunday** – Sunday, March 25 – *Please wear red to Mass*

**Chriism Mass** – Monday, March 26 – St. Peter’s Cathedral, London

**Holy Thursday** – Thursday, March 29 – St. Boniface Church at 7 pm
with Adoration until Midnight

**Good Friday** – Friday, March 30 – St. Boniface Church at 11 am – Simple Service
- St. Peter’s Church at 3 pm – Solemn Service

**Easter Vigil** – Saturday, March 31 – St. Peter’s Church at 8 pm

**Easter Sunday** – Sunday, April 1 – St. Boniface at 9 am, St. Peter’s at 11 am

Dear Parishioners:

**Lent** is coming! (The term comes to us from the Germanic heritage of our English language, referring to the *lengthening* hours of sunlight we are beginning to enjoy.) Happy **World Marriage Day**! Was it in Pope Francis’ first exhortation *The Joy of the Gospel*, when he called the Church to make better use of everything the secular world has to offer – like **Valentine’s Day** – in celebrating the love of God? Perhaps we need to fast. [As the CCCB Leaflet *Keeping Friday* mentions, the “law of Friday abstinence obliges Catholics who are 14 years of age and older”. Adults in good health (16-65) are asked to fast (ie. one simple meal and two smaller ones which together would form one meal) on **Ash Wednesday & Good Friday**.] this February 14th, but that should not stop our creative powers from finding a way to let our Valentines know how much we cherish their love. All-you-can-eat-fish is not good for our bodies and definitely not good for our souls! I am convinced God is calling us to a major transformation in how we live our lives through Pope Francis’ teaching *Amoris Laetitia*: please consider joining our **daytime or evening study groups** (see the posters for further info) as we go chapter-by-chapter through the document. I know I have referred to us attending a parish mission in one of our neighbouring parishes but it looks like neither Goderich, Mount Carmel/Exeter nor Grand Bend are hosting one! While Stratford is hosting a womens’ series CRAVE it looks like the Spirit is leading us to focus our attention on studying *Amoris Laetitia*. Besides our regular observances of the **Stations of the Cross** and **All-day Confessions** in March, I am sure we’ll be busy enough! Jesus chooses to heal the man with leprosy: may we present our wounds to Christ and receive his healing-this week! God bless you. Fr. Matt

**Life and Family Prayer for Families & Small Groups**

Jesus, lover of sinners and healer of body and soul, open our eyes to see you in those who make us uncomfortable. When we are tempted to draw lines between ourselves and others, make yourself visible despite those lines of separation we imagine, that we might cross them in faith, finding you in your beautiful and broken people. Amen.